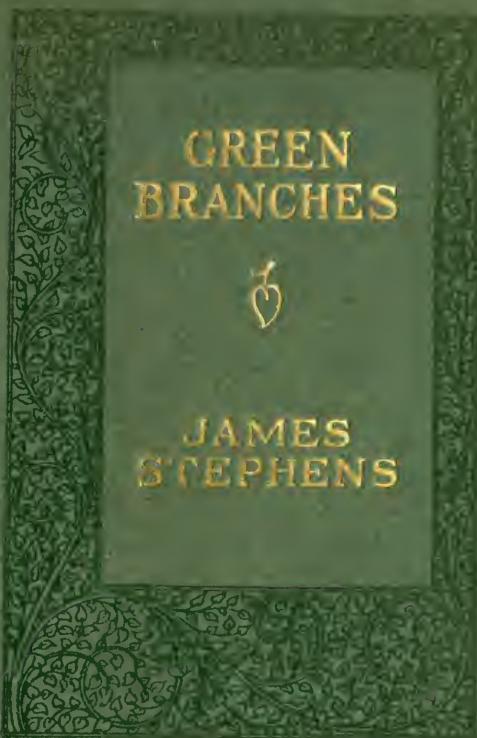


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GREEN BRANCHES



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# Green Branches

BY

**James Stephens**

AUTHOR OF "THE HILL OF VISION," "SONGS  
FROM THE CLAY," "THE CROCK  
OF GOLD," ETC.

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1916

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1915

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1916

JOY BE WITH US



GREEN BRANCHES



The  
Autumn in Ireland:  
1915

(I)

It may be on a quiet mountain-top,  
Or in a valley folded among hills  
You take your path, and often you  
will stop  
To hear the pleasant chatter of the  
rills,  
The piping of a wind in branches  
green,  
The murmuring of widely-lifted  
spray  
As long boughs swing  
And hear the twittering

GREEN FRANCHISES

Of drowsy birds when the great  
sun is seen  
Climbing the steep horizon to the  
day.

The lovely moon trailing her silver  
dress  
By quiet waters. Each living star  
Moving apart in holy quietness,  
Sphere over golden sphere moving  
afar,  
These I can see;  
And the unquiet zone  
Rolling in snow along the edge of  
sight.  
The world is very fair, and I am  
free  
To see its beauty and to be  
In solitude, and quite forget, and  
quite

Lose out of memory all I have  
known  
Of everything but this.

(2)

Straying apart in sad and mourn-  
ful way,  
Alone, or with my heart for com-  
pany,  
Keeping the tone of a dejected day  
And a bewilderment that came to  
me;  
I said—The Spring  
Will never come again, and there is  
end  
Of everything.

Day after day  
The sap will ebb away from the  
great tree,

And when the sap is gone  
Then piteously  
She tumbles to the clay:  
And we say only—Such a one  
Had pleasant shade, but there is  
end of her.—

And you, and even you, the year  
Will drain and dry, and you will  
disappear.

Then to my heart there came so  
wild a stir,  
And such great pity and astonish-  
ment,  
And such a start of fear and woe  
had I,  
That where I went I did not know,  
And only this did know,  
That you could die.

(3)

I would have liked to sing from  
fuller throat  
To you who sang so well, but here  
I stay  
Resting the music on a falling note,  
And hear it die away and die away,  
With beauty unrehearsed, and life  
and love  
Unsung.

For I had clung,  
With what of laughter and of  
eagerness,  
Unto the hope that I might chance  
to be  
The maker of a music nothing less  
Than those great poets of anti-  
quity,

Who sang of clouds and winds, of  
hills and clods,  
Of trees and streams, and of the  
mind of man;  
And chaunted too the universal  
gods,  
And their high guardianship since  
time began;  
And did not fail before a theme  
although  
It passed the reason.

(4)

I heard a bird sing in the woods  
today  
A failing song.  
The times had caught on him.  
In autumn boughs he tried a  
wonted lay,

And was abashed to find his music  
grim

As the crows song.

Then, when I raised an air  
To comfort him,

I wretched was to hear  
The crow did croak and chatter  
everywhere

Inside my ear

And so, behold,  
I am a saddened elf;

And, as a deer  
Flies timidly to shade,

I fly to laughter and I hide myself,  
And couch me in the coverts that I  
made

Against those bold ambitions, and  
forswear

The palm, the prize, or what it is  
of gear

A poet gets with his appointed  
share  
Of bread and beer.

(5)

Upon the grass I drop this tuneful  
reed,  
And turn from it aside, and turn  
from more  
That I had fancied to be mine in-  
deed  
Beyond all reclamation. See the  
door  
Set in the boundary wall yawns  
windily,  
It will be shut when I have wan-  
dered through,  
And open will no more again for me  
This side of life whatever thing I  
do.

And so, good-bye, and so, good-night to you,  
And farewell all. Behold the lifted hand,  
And the long last look upon the view,  
And the last glimpse of that most lovely land.  
And thus away unto the mundane sphere,  
And look not back again nor turn anew,  
And hear no more that laughter at the ear,  
And sing no more for you.

The  
Spring in Ireland:  
1916

(1)

Do not forget my charge I beg of  
you;  
That of what flow'rs you find of  
fairest hue  
And sweetest odour you do gather  
those  
Are best of all the best—A fragrant  
rose,  
A tall calm lily from the waterside,  
A half-blown poppy leaning at the  
side  
Its graceful head to dream among  
the corn,

GREEN THIMBLES

Forget-me-nots that seem as  
though the morn  
Had tumbled down and grew into  
the clay,  
And hawthorn buds that swing  
along the way  
Easing the hearts of those who pass  
them by  
Until they find contentment—Do  
not cry,  
But gather buds, and with them  
greenery  
Of slender branches taken from a  
tree  
Well bannered by the spring that  
saw them fall:  
Then you, for you are cleverest of  
all  
Who have slim fingers and are  
pitiful,

Brimming your lap with bloom  
that you may cull,  
Will sit apart, and weave for every  
head  
A garland of the flow'rs you  
gatheréd.

(2)

Be green upon their graves, O  
happy Spring,  
For they were young and eager  
who are dead;  
Of all things that are young and  
quivering  
With eager life be they remem-  
beréd:  
They move not here, they have  
gone to the clay,  
They cannot die again for liberty;  
Be they remembered of their land  
for aye;

Green be their graves and green  
their memory.

Fragrance and beauty come in  
with the green,  
The ragged bushes put on sweet  
attire,  
The birds forget how chill these  
airs have been,  
The clouds bloom out again and  
move in fire;  
Blue is the dawn of day, calm is  
the lake,  
And merry sounds are fitful in the  
morn;  
In covert deep the young black-  
birds awake,  
They shake their wings and sing  
upon the morn.

At springtime of the year you  
came and swung  
Green flags above the newly-  
greening earth;  
Scarce were the leaves unfolded,  
they were young,  
Nor had outgrown the wrinkles of  
their birth:  
Comrades they thought you of  
their pleasant hour,  
They had but glimpsed the sun  
when they saw you;  
They heard your songs e'er birds  
had singing power,  
And drank your blood e'er that  
they drank the dew.

Then you went down, and then,  
and as in pain,  
The Spring affrighted fled her  
leafy ways,

The clouds came to the earth in  
gusty rain,  
And no sun shone again for many  
days:  
And day by day they told that one  
was dead,  
And day by day the season  
mourned for you,  
Until that count of woe was  
finished,  
And spring remembered all was  
yet to do.

She came with mirth of wind and  
eager leaf,  
With scampering feet and reaching  
out of wings,  
She laughed among the boughs  
and banished grief,

And cared again for all her baby  
things:  
Leading along the joy that has to  
be,  
Bidding her timid buds think on  
the May,  
And told that summer comes with  
victory,  
And told the hope that is all  
creatures stay.

Go Winter now unto your own  
abode,  
Your time is done, and Spring is  
conqueror  
Lift up with all your gear and take  
your road,  
For she is here and brings the sun  
with her;

## ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Now are we resurrected, now are  
we,  
Who lay so long beneath an icy  
hand,  
New-risen into life and liberty,  
Because the Spring is come into  
our land

(3)

In other lands they may,  
With public joy or dole along the  
way,  
With pomp and pagentry and loud  
lament  
Of drums and trumpets, and with  
merriment  
Of grateful hearts, lead into rest  
and sted  
The nation's dead.

If we had drums and trumpets, if  
we had  
Aught of heroic pitch or accent  
glad  
To honour you as bids tradition  
old,  
With banners flung or draped in  
mournful fold,  
And pacing cortege; these would  
we not bring  
For your last journeying.

We have no drums or trumpets;  
naught have we  
But some green branches taken  
from a tree,  
And flowers that grow at large in  
mead and vale;  
Nothing of choice have we, or of  
avail

GREEN THOUGHTS

To do you honour as our honour  
    deems,  
And as your worth beseems.

Sleep drums and trumpets yet a  
    little time:  
All ends and all begins, and there  
    is chime  
At last where discord was, and joy  
    at last  
Where woe wept out her eyes: be  
    not downcast,  
Here is prosperity and goodly  
    cheer,  
For life does follow death, and  
    death is here.

## Joy Be With Us

Joy be with us, and honour close  
the tale;  
Now do we dip the prow, and  
shake the sail,  
And take the wind, and bid adieu  
to rest.

With glad endeavour we begin the  
quest  
That destiny commands, though  
where we go,  
Or guided by what star, no man  
doth know.

Unchartered is our course, our  
hearts untried,

And we may weary e'er we take  
the tide,  
Or make fair haven from the  
moaning sea.

Be ye propitous, winds of destiny,  
On us at first blow not too boister-  
ous bold;  
All Ireland hath is packed into this  
hold,  
Her hopes fly at the peak. Now it  
is dawn,  
And we away. Be with us  
Mananaun.







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